



# News from White Haven

Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site educates the American people regarding the lives and legacies of Civil War General and 18th President Ulysses S. Grant, his wife, Julia Dent Grant, the enslaved African Americans and other residents of White Haven.

News from White Haven is a quarterly publication of Ulysses S. Grant NHS. It is also available online by visiting [www.nps.gov/ulsg/](http://www.nps.gov/ulsg/).

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## Grant Scholar to Speak at Park

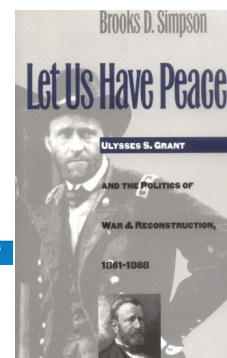
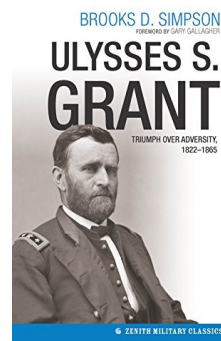


*Brooks D. Simpson*

The park is excited to host Brooks D. Simpson, a well-respected historian, Grant biographer, and professor at Arizona State University, who will be giving a talk at the park on Saturday, February 11th at 10:00 AM. Dr. Simpson's talk is entitled "Slave, Soldier, Citizen: Ulysses S. Grant and Black Americans."

Although Ulysses S. Grant's reputation has recently improved in the eyes of many historians, his reputation was dogged for many years by claims of drunkenness, corruption, and incompetence. Dr. Simpson was one of the first historians to question this standard interpretation of Grant. He first gained notoriety through a book review essay in *Civil War History* that strongly critiqued historian William McFeely's 1981 Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Grant, which perpetuated a largely negative view of the General and President.

Since then Dr. Simpson has written a multitude of books and articles



about Ulysses S. Grant and nineteenth century U.S. history.

Dr. Simpson's books on Grant include *Let Us Have Peace: Ulysses S. Grant and the Politics of War and Reconstruction, 1861-1868* (1991), *The Reconstruction Presidents* (1998), and *Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph Over Adversity, 1822-1865* (2000). He is currently working on another biography of Grant that focuses on his Presidential years and the end of his life.

Dr. Simpson holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He worked for three years as an assistant editor of *The Papers of Andrew Johnson* and another three years as a history professor at Wofford College before joining the faculty at Arizona State in 1990.

Dr. Simpson's talk is one of several upcoming events at the park in the next few months. See the back page for more information.



# Civil War to Civil Rights Commemoration a Success

The National Park Service recently released a report on the agency's "Civil War to Civil Rights" initiative. "Civil War to Civil Rights" lasted from 2011 to 2015 and aimed to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War and the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement. More than 100 units of the NPS, including Ulysses S. Grant NHS, actively participated in the initiative.

"Civil War to Civil Rights" was born in 1998 out of conversations among NPS managers at Civil War sites. These leaders sought to change the way parks interpreted the war. They focused on the need to interpret the causes and consequences of the war and the importance of highlighting the experiences of African Americans, Native Americans, women, civilians, and others.

Over the next 13 years the NPS compiled several studies outlining these goals, and the decision was made to also commemorate the Civil Rights Movement in order to draw broad connections between both time periods. Telling these important stories remains a central goal of the NPS today.

Ulysses S. Grant NHS undertook several education programs to commemorate "Civil War to Civil Rights." These programs included a new park orientation video on Ulysses S. Grant, school tours dedicated to interpreting slavery at White Haven, living history programs, and a Civil War trading card initiative. A pair of Civil War era cannons owned by local philanthropist Andrew Busch were also loaned to the park throughout the duration of the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War.

To read the full NPS report on "Civil War to Civil Rights," see: <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/upload/CIVIL-WAR-TO-CIVIL-RIGHTS-SUMMARY-REPORT-1-v2.pdf>



*Local Boy Scouts march to commemorate the Battle of Vicksburg*



*Nightwalk Living History Performance at White Haven*



*Civil War cannons donated to the Park during the Sesquicentennial*



## Spotlight on the Park: 19th Century Sofa

Visitors to White Haven sometimes ask about the kind of furniture the Grants' would have had during their time at the home. Unfortunately none of their furniture remains in existence today, as much of it was destroyed in an 1873 fire while stored in the home of Julia's brother, Louis.



The Grant family would have undoubtedly owned Victorian-style chairs, tables, rugs, and other furniture that were lost in the fire. Lacking any original furniture, each room of White Haven was left empty when the National Park Service first opened the house for tours in the 1990s. Over the past ten years, however, the park has maintained a small number of period furniture pieces throughout the home.

This small collection recently grew when the family of Ranger David Newmann generously donated a late-nineteenth century sofa to the park. The sofa's maker is unknown, but it remains in great condition today despite years of daily usage.

The sofa is currently on display in the Sitting Room of White Haven, where the Grant children would have played games, read books, and spent quality time together as a family. Ranger David remarked that "the sofa belonged to my Great-great Grandparents Peter and Margaret Iven and has been in my family for more than 100 years. We are proud that it has found a good home and a new purpose."

## Meet the staff:

The park's maintenance staff has a new member who's working hard to help keep the park looking great. Daniel Plogger was hired this past summer through the federal government's Pathways Program, which helps students and veterans of the military get jobs with the federal government.

Daniel was born and raised in nearby High Ridge, Missouri. He graduated from St. John Vianney High School in 2015 and is currently a sophomore at the University of Missouri, where he's majoring in accounting. Daniel will be working full-time on the staff during summer and winter breaks and part-time during the school year.

Daniel is a jack-of-all-trades worker. He has done much to help the maintenance team, including mowing and trimming the grass, cleaning the Visitor Center, Museum, and White Haven estate, and repairing broken items throughout the park.

In his free time, Daniel enjoys watch-

## Daniel Plogger



ing movies, traveling, and playing sports. He's also taken an interest in visiting more National Park Service sites throughout the country since he started working at the park. He is currently planning a summer trip to go kayaking at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park in Colorado.

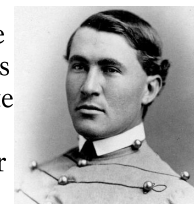
## Kids' Corner: Frederick Dent Grant at Vicksburg

If you wanted to enlist in the Union military during the Civil War, you had to be at least 18 years old, just like today. Many boys younger than 18 served during the war, however. President Abraham Lincoln said that teenage boys could enlist if they got their parents' permission first, and some boys lied about their age to recruiting agents.

Julia and Ulysses Grant wanted their oldest son, Frederick Dent Grant, to observe events on the battlefield. When Fred was 12 years old, he was taken out of school and allowed to join his father during the Vicksburg Campaign in Mississippi.

During the campaign, Fred observed some Confederate soldiers crossing the Big Black river in retreat.

While standing at the river, young Fred was shot by a Confederate sharpshooter in the leg. In a book he later wrote about the incident, Fred remembered that the wound was "slight but very painful."



Fred still dreamed of someday serving in the U.S. Army, just like his father. He graduated from West Point in 1871 and served most of his adult life in the Army, including service in the Spanish-American War. Later in life Fred retired from the Army at the rank of Major General.

Fred died in 1912 at the age of 62. He and his wife Ida are buried at West Point Cemetery.



**Ulysses S. Grant NHS**  
**7400 Grant Road**  
**St. Louis, MO 63123**  
**(314) 842-1867**

## Upcoming Events

- February 11th, 10am: Brooks Simpson Lecture
- February 24th, 7pm & February 25th, 10am & 1pm: Abraham Lincoln Portrayed by Fritz Klein
- March 4th, 10am-2pm: Quilt Programs (No RSVP)
- March 10th, 7pm & March 11th, 10am & 1pm: A Conversation with FDR
- March 24th, 7pm & March 25th, 10am & 1pm: The Life and Death of Elijah Lovejoy
- March 31st, 7pm & April 1st, 10am & 1pm: Harriet Tubman

*Reservations are required for these events. Please call the park at (314) 842-1867 or speak to park staff at the visitor center welcome desk.*

## Did you know?

In September 1879, General Grant used a telephone for the first time. Julia and Ulysses had just finished their two-year world tour and arrived in San Francisco, where they ate at Cliff House. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Grant was dining on a “spoonful of ice cream” when George C. Perkins, who had recently been elected Governor of California, called on the restaurant’s telephone. “The General was immediately

informed and betrayed much interest,” the paper reported. “He stated that he had never seen the telephone” and “interestingly examined the silver glistening bells and the mysterious box [,] intrepidly clutching the two ear-pieces attached to cords.” When he finished the call General Grant remarked that the phone was “wonderful. I heard every word . . . I suppose that in a year or two the world will wonder how it ever did without it.”

